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26th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Acting President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in its resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to the time limits in the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings. This will enable maximum participation within the limited time available for this meeting. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and to submit their full statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the "all protocol observed" principle, whereby participants are encouraged, in the interest of time, to refrain from the listing of standard protocol expressions during their statements, is recommended. In the light of that given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements, so that all those inscribed will be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Holmes (Canada): Canada applauds the ongoing efforts of the General Assembly and Member States to address the complex global issue of trafficking in persons, including through the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We are committed to this fight both at home and abroad. Canada was among the first countries to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Since its ratification, Canada has made significant progress in its fight against trafficking in persons. Strong criminal laws are in place to prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, which is punishable by severe penalties up to life imprisonment, and federal legislation enshrines rights for all. Canada launched its national action plan to combat human trafficking, which consolidated efforts to combat the crime into a comprehensive approach using prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is currently finalizing an extensive evaluation of its national plan. The results of that study will inform us of the best way forward on this important issue.

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In the area of prevention, we have continued to develop information and outreach programmes that target the most at-risk populations, including aboriginal women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons, youth and/or runaways, foreign workers and those who are economically disadvantaged.

In terms of prosecutions, we have made significant progress in addressing our criminal-justice responses to trafficking crimes through targeted training and various reforms. Those actions have resulted in more convictions and a better understanding of the issue among criminal-justice practitioners.

In terms of victim protection, the Government of Canada continues to work with its domestic partners, including provincial and territorial Governments and non-governmental organizations.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to highlight one initiative that I believe will be of interest to States parties, which was launched in 2016. Project Protect is a joint initiative between the Government of Canada and the private sector, allowing Canadian financial institutions to report transactions that are suspected to involve money-laundering related to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation. In 2016, compared to the same four-month period in 2015, the Project produced a 400 per cent increase in financial-intelligence disclosures to law enforcement linking money-laundering to trafficking in persons.

In addition to our domestic efforts, Canada continues to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration and INTERPOL, among other international partners, to provide technical assistance and capacity-building, enabling countries to successfully address trafficking in persons.

Acknowledging that trafficking is a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls, our new feminist international assistance policy will address the unacceptably high rates of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women and girls, including those in situations of human trafficking. In addition, Canada is making strides to eradicate trafficking in persons from the production of goods and provision of services. As part of this, we are expanding our code of conduct for procurement to ensure that the Government of Canada's supply chains are free of trafficking in persons.

The role of civil-society organizations in combating trafficking in persons cannot be understated. These organizations, which are often the first point of contact for victims, carry out important advocacy on their behalf and provide important knowledge, skills and expertise, particularly in the realm of victim care, support and rehabilitation.

In conclusion, Canada urges the widest possible ratification and implementation of the United Nations Protocol, as it is the key international instrument guiding countries in the fight against trafficking in persons. Canada is committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all countries in order to prevent this crime, bring those who commit it to justice and help survivors go on to lead healthy and productive lives.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Heydarov (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to express my warm greetings and my gratitude to the Assembly for the opportunity to discuss this issue.

As a pioneer and one of the region's most active and progressive countries in preventing human trafficking, as long ago as 2003 the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The three national action plans for 2004, 2009 and 2014, formulated and approved by our Head of State, have played a major role in the complex and systematic struggle against human trafficking in our country. At the Government level, we have adopted a national referral mechanism and rules for identifying and rehabilitating victims of human trafficking, placing them in specialized institutions and repatriating them to their own countries.

In order to coordinate the Government agencies, civil-society organizations and foreign partners working to combat human trafficking, we have established a national coordination agency and an inter-agency commission. With the goal of implementing our national action plan, through our council for State support to non-governmental organizations, under the direction of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, we have funded more than 50 projects.

Within the Ministry of the Interior, we have set up a special police unit to combat human trafficking,

as well as a Government assistance centre, fund and hot line for victims. During this period, Interior Ministry agencies have identified more than 19,000 cases of human trafficking and forced labour, and have prosecuted more than 200 criminal groups and brought to justice 495 criminals. Overall, 774 victims of such crimes have been successfully reintegrated into society. All the victims have been granted the right to compensation, recovery time and a period of reflection, as well as permission to obtain residence permits and assurance of non-punishment. They have all also been provided with legal, medical, psychological and other forms of assistance and returned to normal life.

In conclusion, I would like to express my confidence that every country participating in today's meeting will continue to contribute to our fight against human trafficking, and I wish them every success.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Latvia.

Ms. Vilde (Latvia): Human trafficking affects millions of people every year on every continent. This shameful crime is a highly organized and lucrative business. It is also a gross violation of human rights that mostly affects women and children. Latvia is firmly committed to combating this heinous crime and has developed a strong legal framework for addressing trafficking in human beings through severe punishment based on the relevant United Nations, European Union and Council of Europe legal instruments. At the same time, we have enacted legislation on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking. Latvia also recently signed the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, another area of great concern.

Latvia's national strategy for the prevention of trafficking in human beings in the period from 2014 to 2020 is based on the four Ps — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — and addresses current risks and trends. As a country of origin of victims of human trafficking, especially young women, Latvia pays particular attention to combating trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as labour exploitation and fictitious marriage. Our law-enforcement agencies work in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations in identifying and assisting Latvian and third-country nationals subjected to trafficking for the purpose of exploitation.

Transnational inter-institutional cooperation involving public and private partnership is a core pillar for achieving results in this fight. Raising public awareness and understanding about the risks that lead to human trafficking, in cooperation with media and information communication technology companies, must be a priority.

So-called sham marriages between Latvian citizens and third-country nationals, arranged in other countries with the sole purpose of obtaining a European Union residence permit, have been a serious concern for the Latvian Government in the past few years. Latvia is a part of a regional awareness-raising campaign, involving several European countries, on preventing human trafficking and sham marriages. The project provides regional training for multidisciplinary groups of experts and practitioners, as well as informative activities for raising awareness on the issue. As a result, the number of Latvian citizens in such fictitious marriages abroad has fallen substantially.

An individual- and victim-centred approach that takes victims' needs and best interests into consideration must be our priority. Latvia provides State-funded assistance to victims of trafficking, including social and psychological rehabilitation services, safe shelter, legal aid, compensation, medical treatment, special protection and access to education and the labour market. Non-governmental organizations are involved in all stages, from reporting to identification and victim assistance. Close cooperation between law enforcement, the judiciary and victim service providers should be further facilitated. It is also important to consider how to improve victims' reintegration after they have received services.

Trends in human trafficking are constantly changing and affect every country. Given the transnational nature of this crime, national efforts are not enough. Based on our own experience, it is important for countries of origin to work closely with those of transit and destination to fight this crime together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea.

Mr. Komara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Government of Guinea on the occasion of this high-level meeting to consider the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

My delegation strongly welcomes the Assembly's adoption yesterday of the political declaration on the

implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1), which should help to speed up our fulfilment of our commitments to combating trafficking in persons. We thank partners for their continuing support to the major legislative reform efforts aimed at creating a legal framework for the protection of human rights.

The Republic of Guinea has expressed its willingness to combat this scourge by ratifying the main international, regional and subregional legal instruments for the protection of human rights, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional Protocols, as well as the multilateral agreement of the Economic Community of West African States on combating human trafficking. Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and eliminating trafficking should be one of our priorities in eradicating this scourge.

Guinea is a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of human trafficking, a situation that has encouraged my Government to take a number of measures. We have strengthened our institutional framework for combating human trafficking by establishing a national committee to combat human trafficking and related practices, and developing an emergency plan of action with a budget that includes training judges and security forces and a nationwide awareness-raising campaign. The law on organization of the judiciary and the new criminal code, which transfers criminal jurisdiction from courts of appeal to trial courts, is now in force. We have strengthened our cooperation with neighbouring countries, such as Mali, as part of the fight against trafficking in children. In November, six countries of the subregion will sign a cooperation agreement. We also have a document evaluating our national mechanisms for the care of victims of human trafficking.

I cannot conclude my statement without first asking our technical and financial partners to continue supporting my country in its efforts to combat the exploitation of human beings in all its forms.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Finland.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Finland considers trafficking in persons a grave human rights violation and a serious global problem. It undermines the principles of a democratic society, the rule of law and respect for human dignity. In order to tackle human trafficking, and all the forms of criminal networks and organized crime connected to it, it is crucial that we work together at the international, regional and local levels with a variety of stakeholders, whether authorities, non-governmental organizations or other actors. We consider today's meeting to be essential for highlighting the continuing need for wide cooperation and commitment in combating trafficking in persons. International obligations and best practices make it clear that all counter-trafficking efforts require a holistic approach.

Finland has ratified the international agreements related to trafficking in human beings and translated them into national legislation, and has been taking part in monitoring their implementation within, for example, the United Nations and Council of Europe frameworks. In the past few years we have worked to improve our national system's ability to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. We have appointed a national anti-trafficking coordinator in order to improve our inter-agency cooperation. The national rapporteur on trafficking, who maintains an independent role and reports directly to Parliament, remains an important part of the system.

There is still a lot we can do to better prevent, protect and prosecute. Identifying the victims is a priority but continues to be a challenge in Finland, especially where victims of sexual exploitation are concerned. The authorities often find it hard to reach victims living on the margins of society, sometimes as undocumented migrants. Civil society has a central role to play in finding and assisting them. Developing functional partnerships is therefore a key element of our anti-trafficking strategy. Most of the trafficking victims we find are victims of sexual exploitation; about half of all victims detected are women and a fifth are girls. As a human rights violation, trafficking requires a human-rights-based approach, and special attention should be paid to the gendered nature of such crimes. The specific needs of women, girls and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse must be taken into account in developing assistance systems.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Human trafficking and modern slavery are among the biggest human rights scandals of our time. They are an affront to the public conscience, constitute grave violations of human rights law and are a serious obstacle to

sustainable development. They directly affect 46 million people worldwide.

With the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, we have agreed on an international definition of the crime of trafficking in persons. The Protocol provides a legal framework to effectively prevent and combat all forms of trafficking in persons, including the exploitation of others' prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude and the removal of organs. While the Trafficking in Persons Protocol has been widely ratified, it still lacks the universal acceptance that would enable it to exert its full potential. We hope that this goal will be achieved soon. Liechtenstein has been a strong advocate for its universality, in the context, among others, of the Universal Periodic Review, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council.

Law enforcement and criminal justice are key dimensions in our common fight against human trafficking and modern slavery. A comprehensive response on the part of the international community, including to new and emerging challenges, also requires strong cooperation in other aspects. We therefore welcome the fact that the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development addresses the issue in three of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals — Goals 5, on gender equality, 8, on decent work and economic growth, and 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies. We have established a collective understanding that combating modern slavery and the trafficking of persons is intimately linked to sustainable development efforts, peace and security, and human rights. We had hoped for a more ambitious political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) for this high-level meeting, one that would reflect the need for comprehensive policy responses. In that regard, we consider the Declaration rather a missed opportunity.

Human trafficking and modern slavery are complex phenomena. Nationally, we in Liechtenstein have identified two areas for focusing our engagement. First, we aim to strengthen accountability, including through the involvement of international criminal justice mechanisms. There is a customary norm of international law against slavery, and enslavement is listed as a crime against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Secondly, we have used the expertise and knowledge of our financial centre, particularly our financial intelligence unit, to adapt existing tools to fight money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, which can also help us in the fight against human trafficking by following the money. Those efforts are particularly relevant, because modern slavery is one of the big illegal business models of our day, generating more than $150 billion annually.

The United Nations can be an ideal platform for forming the necessary partnerships among the various United Nations bodies, as long as awareness of the common cause, a cooperative spirit and a commitment to a complementarity of effort prevail. That will enable our Organization to attract the support of Government and private-sector and civil-society entities that are committed and ready to invest in our shared fight.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Hoshino (Japan): On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which provides a great opportunity for Member States, United Nations entities and civil society to evaluate the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime as well as a grave violation of human dignity and integrity. The nexus between it and terrorism has recently become a matter of deep concern, and terrorist groups are using trafficking in persons as a tactic of fund-raising and recruitment, as the Security Council highlighted last year with its adoption of resolution 2331 (2016). That new development is helping to prolong and exacerbate conflict and instability. Member States have the shared responsibility to eliminate this crime. Japan welcomes the fact that Member States at this high-level meeting are demonstrating our strong political will to take decisive and concerted action to end this heinous crime wherever it may occur.

The fight against trafficking in persons is one of the most important policy areas for the Government of Japan. The Government takes comprehensive and holistic measures with effective coordination among relevant agencies based on its 2014 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As required by that Action Plan, the Government follows up on its implementation by issuing an annual report with a

view to broadly providing information on the measures taken by the Government and to raise awareness among citizens.

In addition to our efforts at the national level, building strong partnerships with various international and regional stakeholders is also of interest to us. In that regard, Japan has been holding an annual Japan-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) strategic policy dialogue since 2013. Enhancing law-enforcement capacity around the world to combat trafficking in persons is one of the priorities of that cooperation, and we are delighted to see experts from Japan playing a central role in implementing various anti-trafficking projects developed by UNODC, particularly in South-East Asian countries.

Japan has also been providing technical assistance for prevention, victim protection and rehabilitation measures through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration. We also welcome the fact that the Japan-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Integration Fund has been utilized to implement projects to address this crime.

I take this opportunity to note that Japan became a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol on Trafficking in Persons on 11 July 2017. Since then, in September, Japan participated in the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons as a State party to the Protocol. As these international instruments play a central role in the fight against trafficking in persons, Japan is committed to engaging fully in the process of establishing a mechanism for the review of the implementation of these instruments and to further strengthening cooperation with other countries.

I would like to conclude my statement by expressing our commitment to continuing to take practical steps to address this issue in line with the Global Plan of Action and relevant Sustainable Development Goals, in close cooperation with other Member States, the relevant United Nations organizations and civil society.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Cabo Verde.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde): Trafficking in persons is a matter of concern for the Government of Cabo Verde in many respects. It represents a real threat to human dignity and to human development. It is a denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a source of wounds and suffering for its victims. It is also a crime committed by perpetrators who deserve to be treated with no mercy by national and international law enforcement. Finally, it requires a global and political response.

Moreover, it is our view that preventing and combating trafficking in persons is an endeavour that must bring together all related Sustainable Development Goals, namely, those with respect to poverty eradication, quality education, decent work, reduced inequalities, and promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, combined, in addition, with measures for safe and regular migration and safe tourism free of sexual exploitation. The strides made to address these phenomena should be gender-sensitive and responsive, with policies aimed at combating all forms of discrimination, forced labour, sexual exploitation and abuse, and all forms of violence against women and girls.

To combat trafficking in persons, Cabo Verde first endorsed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and related Protocols. Secondly, Cabo Verde criminalized trafficking through its domestic legislation. Thirdly, my country implemented institutional and operational responses.

Nevertheless, with its limited resources and with a large maritime area under its jurisdiction to control, Cabo Verde underlines the need to expand the means allocated to implement policies and programmes that might end this scourge. Appropriate and timely international cooperation on capacity-building, technical assistance and support for operational programmes at the country level can make a difference by providing bold responses against trafficking in persons and other related transnational organized crimes.

That is precisely the spirit of the political declaration adopted at this high-level meeting of the General Assembly in its opening segment (resolution 72/1). We reaffirm that global financing to prevent and fight human trafficking needs to be increased and improved. That is also how we can pave the way for the effective implementation of the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Let me conclude by underlining the fact that, as we move further into the twenty-first century, human beings are still capable of trafficking people, of modern forms of slavery and other related crimes. We have said before and repeat that these are crimes against humanity

and that they remain unpunished. It is therefore in our hands to leave no one behind in the trafficking trap, if we can join our wills, our hands and our means in a global strategy for this purpose. The strategy exists already through the Global Plan of Action. It is up to all of us to implement it successfully.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24).

As a country of origin, destination and transit in the trafficking in persons, Chile has not escaped the sad reality of human trafficking. That is why, following the international guidelines set forth in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, my country has developed a complete and comprehensive public State policy that includes the axes of prevention, persecution and assistance for victims. Two national anti-trafficking plans, adopted in 2011 and 2015, and the training of nearly 2,000 public officials in detection and prosecution demonstrate the permanence of our policy and the determination to continue to promote it.

In the second plan, for the period from 2015 to 2018, we have made progress in fundamental ways to address this multidimensional phenomenon, such as broad recognition of the rights of victims and of the need to improve and deepen coordination in terms of prevention and prosecution, and the incorporation of indicators for monitoring programme implementation. That is relevant if we consider that in Chile there have not been not a great many formalized cases of trafficking in persons since its classification as a crime in 2011. At the national level, only 29 cases and 206 victims were registered between 2011 and 2016.

Since the classification of the crime of smuggling migrants, that joint work has produced concrete results. Mmanuals for prevention, detection and persecution have been produced, and there are specific actions to provide care and reparation for victims.

In the international sphere, Chile has worked to promote cooperation with countries of the Latin American and Carribean region, as well as at the subregional level with the Southern Common Market and the Union of South American Nations, and at the hemispheric level with the Organization of American States. Bilaterally, we work with Argentina, Colombia, the United States and Peru. Today, we are moving forward in planning cooperation with the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

We also recognize the importance of concerted global action in the framework of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, in Vienna, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We aspire to deepen and integrate those actions and to develop spaces of coordination and dialogue with these institutions.

Chile favours vigorous progress along those lines. Thus we systematically support the achievement of a transparent, inclusive, non-invasive and impartial international instrument. Along with measuring the level of compliance of States, it would also indicate the extent to which that compliance has led to progress towards the ultimate objectives of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica endorses the statement made by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24), and we highlight the importance of the focus on placing the individual at the centre in prevention, protection and fighting trafficking in persons.

Children still make up one third of victims at the global level, and women and girls 71 per cent, according to the latest report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. For that reason, any strategy to combat trafficking must take into account the factors that increase the risks to our children, as well as a gender perspective that will assist us in designing specific actions to increase the effective protection of those vulnerable populations.

In addition, one of the major challenges is to improve data collection, given that trafficking extends throughout the world, with millions of victims and a large number of cases remaining hidden. There have been major efforts to criminalize this human rights violation, as reflected in the fact that 88 per cent of countries have classified it as a criminal offence.

Unfortunately, when it comes to carrying out the laws, the sentencing rates are still low, with only 9,071 sentences reported globally in 2016.

We should recall that trafficking in persons is commonly associated with trafficking in organs, drugs and arms, and with money-laundering and other activities of organized crime. That is why a comprehensive, coordinated focus is needed to fight all of those crimes and to coordinate actions in the fight against the supply and demand.

A final challenge is support for victims. In many cases that is still inadequate, and we need policies and programmes that allow human-trafficking survivors to rebuild their lives and prevent revictimization. Since 2013, Costa Rica has had a law to combat trafficking in persons, and we have been struggliing to fight this scourge through a national coalition addressing it in a comprehensive and inter-institutional manner.

For our country, the fight against trafficking must begin with awareness in all sectors. We have designed programmes to that end for the most relevant public officials and institutions, ranging from the police who conduct raids to the judges who hear cases. We have also involved civil society and the business sector, which play a fundamental role in the prevention and combat of trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Moreno González (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Egypt yesterday on behalf of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

The Constitution of Ecuador expressly prohibits slavery, exploitation, servitude and the trafficking of persons. It recognizes the State's role in adopting measures for the prevention and eradication of human trafficking and for the protection and social reintegration of victims of human trafficking and other forms of violations of liberty.

My country has made major progress in implementing its national plan to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and other forms of exploitation and prostitution. In that plan the axes of action are prevention, promotion of rights, assistance and the comprehensive protection of victims, as well as investigation, punishment and the strengthening of international cooperation in order to effectively fight trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, in line with the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Our plan is implemented in an integral manner through an inter-institutional committee with a multidimensional focus and with competencies in the social, health, educational, productive, security, legal and social control spheres.

Ecuador is party to the international instruments in this area. Therefore, the comprehensive criminal code, which has been in force since 2014, classifies and punishes trafficking in persons as a grave violation of human rights. The penalization of the crime is consistent with the provisions of the Palermo Protocol and in some aspects is a greater guarantor, because it broadens the scope of the forms of exploitation subject to punishment.

In the interests of time, I would like to touch on only some of the main successes in the different axes of action, such as the guarantee of special protection, assistance for victims of trafficking and migrant-smuggling and restitution of their rights, and protecting the safety and privacy of victims and their family. The legislation classifying human trafficking as a crime applies the principle of the non-punishability of victims, which guarantees that a victim of trafficking is not to be criminally tried or punished for any infraction committed during the time that he or she was trafficked.

Another major step forward is the elimination of the need to prove the means leading to the crime — deception, fraud, threat and coercion. That makes it easier for the justice system to prove the existence of the crime.

In the area of alliances and international coordination, Ecuador, recognizing that 94 per cent of the victims in Latin America are captured, moved and exploited either within the country of origin or in the region, acts in conjunction with neighbouring countries and countries in the region to develop preventive actions, break up criminal networks, rescue victims, and encourages various initiatives at the bilateral and regional levels.

The interrelation between trafficking and migration is another vital topic. Ecuador is a country of origin, transit, destination and return of persons in mobility. For that particular reason, we have seen the need for a new framework to strengthen the mechanisms to protect

the rights of those persons. We have adopted policies and specific national actions to prevent and punish any practice related to the trafficking and smuggling of migrants and to guarantee the restitution and comprehensive reparation of the victims' rights. That includes the development of protocols, inter-institutional coordination at the regional and international levels and prevention programmes, among other things.

Ecuador is grateful to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this high-level meeting, making it possible for us to evaluate and advance the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking, and we applaude the adoption of the poltical declaration (resolution 72/1) yesterday. It is essential to strengthen the political will of all States to end this criminal activity, which undermines human dignity and has negative effects on development, peace and security, and human rights. Ecuador reiterates its unwavering will in the fight against this crime, as well as its commitment to resolutely support the processes and measures that are carried out in this context.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Sukhee (Mongolia): At the very outset, let me express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening in a timely manner this important high-level meeting to assess the implementation of Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is designed to produce a renewed political will and commitments to end the heinous crime of human trafficking.

Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. Poverty, unemployment, lack of socioeconomic opportunities, gender-based violence, discrimination and marginalization are some of the contributing factors that make persons vulnerable to human trafficking in developing countries.

Regarded as a source and, to a lesser extent, a destination country, Mongolia is not immune to human trafficking. Mongolia has acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2008, and made significant and made significant efforts towards enhancing its legal framework, including by adopting the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons, the Law on Victim and Witness Protection, and the revised Criminal Code. While its legal environment has been significantly improved, weaknesses persist in victim identification and the prosecution of cases in the country. Law enforcement and judges have an uneven general understanding of trafficking in persons and its related legislation. Often due to misleading interpretations, trafficking offenders tend to be prosecuted under a lesser offence. In the past six years, 54 human trafficking cases were investigated and only 15 individuals were convicted of human trafficking.

Four months ago, the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons was renewed by the Government. Guided by the 3 Ps approach of prevention, protection and prosecution, the programme aims to strengthen law enforcement to detect, prosecute perpetrators and protect victims. It is worth noting that the Network of Anti-Trafficking Non-Governmental Organizations in Mongolia, an umbrella organization founded by 19 local non-governmental organizations, actively participated in the development of the programme.

We believe that the current progress achieved and the concerted efforts accelerated by Member States and international organizations as part of the Global Plan of Action present promising opportunities to advance a holistic approach to combat trafficking in persons globally. Moving forward, we should fully take advantage of innovation and advancement in information and communications technologies for a more effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action. We also stress the need to intensify international cooperation, including capacity-building and technical assistance, especially for developing countries, to combat trafficking in persons.

In conclusion, I am pleased to note that Mongolia is honoured to be serving the second year of its membership in the Human Rights Council. As part of our endeavour to protect human rights and dignity worldwide, we reaffirm our firm commitment to combat trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Cyprus.

Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus): We highly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important meeting. In addition to the statement of the European Union, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Seven years ago, the international community, united by the universal condemnation of trafficking in persons, joined efforts to implement globally an action plan to combat this heinous crime. Member States, under the guidance of the United Nations, have developed comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies and engaged in cross-border cooperation in investigations and prosecutions. They have taken measures for the restoration of the human rights of victims and set in place strategic partnerships with civil society, thus joining efforts for raising awareness and consciousness.

This high-level meeting reflects the strong commitment of the international community to the fight against human trafficking. We are here today because we share the fundamental belief that trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and a shameful crime against human dignity. No doubt, the most recent inclusion of targets on trafficking in persons in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is very important. In parallel, the efforts of the Council of Europe, the European Union and other regional and international organizations that have joined this fight are also crucial. Unfortunately, and despite our continuous efforts, statistics reiterate the extent of the problem, showing that today more than 20 million persons are victims of human trafficking, almost 6 million of whom are children.

The often unavoidable link between conflict and migration means that people escaping from war and persecution may become victims of trafficking. In that regard, the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, under the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees, creates a more solid and comprehensive framework to combat human trafficking. Prevention of trafficking in persons, protection and assistance to victims, prosecution of perpetrators and strengthening of partnerships are also priorities of Cyprus. Our contribution to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, underlines this commitment. All people are born free and equal. Our responsibility is to make sure that no person or child is deprived of the right to a dignified life.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Bulgaria.

Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24).

The Government of Bulgaria is strongly committed to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, prosecuting the traffickers and protecting and assisting the victims. Bulgaria emphasizes the importance of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and welcomes this high-level meeting and the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which renews the global commitment to eliminating this heinous crime and ensuring protection of the victims, also in line with the responsibilities ensuing from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind.

Trafficking in persons is a grave human rights violation and a highly lucrative form of transnational organized crime with huge human, social and economic implications that requires a concerted global response. Bulgaria emphasizes the importance of accelerating international cooperation to eliminate human trafficking through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and cross-border approach. Better cooperation should be established among countries of origin, transit and destination on information-sharing and victims' identification, support and reintegration, including in the consolidation of transnational referral mechanisms and data-collection systems. Bulgaria reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention, which constitute a solid foundation of international law in this area, as well as Security Council resolution 2331 (2016).

Bulgaria was among the pioneers in Europe in adopting specialized anti-trafficking legislation back in 2003, and currently it has one of the most comprehensive institutional frameworks to combat trafficking in persons. Bulgaria has penalized trafficking in persons and introduced more severe punishment for crimes involving children.

Bulgaria's new national anti-trafficking strategy for 2017-2021 contains the Government's long-term vision to combat trafficking in persons. It places special emphasis on early detection and prevention and

follows a victim-centred, human rights-based, gender-specific and child-focused approach, thereby enabling a series of consultations with all stakeholders and an analysis of ongoing trends. Special measures are taken to raise public awareness, especially among children, in partnership with local authorities, civil society and youth volunteers. The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings coordinates the State policy in this priority area and provides assistance for victims of trafficking in Government-funded shelters, including specialized facilities for child victims.

In recent years, Bulgaria has increased its capacity to ensure the rights of trafficking victims and has stepped up its participation in international efforts to fight this crime. Combating trafficking in persons will be one of the priorities during the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2018.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the President, his team and all those in charge of drawing up the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We welcome the adoption of the Plan and all the tireless efforts deployed to that end.

We reaffirm the commitment and readiness of Saudi Arabia to help any efforts to end the crime of human trafficking and to work in cooperation with the international community, beginning with the adoption of national codes and legislation that are consistent both with the vision of the United Nations for sustainable development and with the Kingdom's 2030 Vision, taking due account of the United Nations Global Plan of Action.

My country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, attaches great importance to the rights of citizens and foreign residents in Saudi Arabia, whom we provide with all the necessary care, consistent with sharia — Islamic law — which honours the values and dignity of human beings and rejects anything that undermines them. That is why Saudi Arabia is among the first rank of countries in the fight against human trafficking.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always been among the first countries to ratify United Nations protocols to combat trafficking of human beings in all its forms, in particular crimes that affect women, children and persons with disabilities. We have ratified 16 international conventions, including the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour. We have also played an active role in international efforts to combat the crime of human trafficking. Last week, we participated in the high-level meeting called by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which issued a declaration and a call for action to eliminate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. We supported the declaration and the call to action alongside other countries. All of this confirms the international resolve to combat and eradicate these heinous crimes.

At the national level, in 2009, my Government enacted a code to combat human trafficking. An anti-human-trafficking committee was also established within the framework of the human rights body that coordinates national efforts to combat and eradicate those crimes in all their forms, and helps to raise awareness among the public. In addition, contact centres have been established to offer their services to foreign workers working in Saudi Arabia. These centres receive complaints and resolve disputes as quickly as possible in an effort to safeguard the rights of employers and employees alike. The code also stipulates deterrent penalties against anyone found guilty of human trafficking, including prison sentences of up to 15 years and significant fines. In some cases, the punishments stipulated by the code are more severe when crimes target women, children or persons with disabilities.

My delegation wishes to share with the international community a source of very grave concern — the increase in crimes carried out by armed groups connected with human trafficking in conflict zones, targeting women and children in particular. Such crimes take advantage of the needs of the victims and the absence of proper structures, and represent a challenge to the international community. We must cooperate at the international and national levels. With this in mind, we call for greater information-sharing on those who finance and encourage those crimes.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms our cooperation with the United Nations and the international community, in particular on the protection of human beings from human trafficking. Penalties that dissuade those who might commit these crimes should be encouraged. The negative psychological effects on victims must also be taken into account.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mero (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank the President for the opportunity to make a statement on this agenda item. Indeed, this high-level meeting is timely, as the world is embarking on a global effort to combat trafficking in persons.

It is an undeniable truth that, at some point, each country is affected by acts of human trafficking. Women and children are among most vulnerable groups affected by this illegal phenomenon. Tanzania, like all other countries around the world, sees this as slavery in a disguised form. As we convene to appraise the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, I stand here today to testify, on behalf of my Government, to the progress made in the implementation of legal instruments set forth to combat trafficking in persons.

Tanzania has taken various initiatives to complement the efforts of the international community in combating trafficking in persons, including the ratification of the relevant international legal instruments. The Government enacted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act No.6 in 2008, which prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes punishments for perpetrators of human trafficking. The Act also established the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Secretariat, with an annual budget allocated by the Government to facilitate their activities.

The Government has also developed a directory of service providers for victims of human trafficking and a manual for civil-society organizations in handling incidences of trafficking in persons. In addition, the Government has established guidelines for safe family reunification for victims of trafficking and drawn up a training manual for law-enforcement officials on matters related to trafficking in persons. In recognition of the importance of data to inform Government action, Tanzania's collaboration with development partners has established a national database on trafficking in persons as a means to inform policies and allocate funds.

Apart from the preparation of a national action plan to combat trafficking, Tanzania is also implementing the standard operating procedures for the identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons and for protecting, assisting and referring trafficked children. Moreover, Tanzania makes significant efforts to raise public awareness as a key to increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of the issues that affect the groups most vulnerable to human trafficking.

On behalf of the Government of Tanzania, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the support that Tanzania has been receiving from development partners in the fight against human trafficking. My country stands ready to enhance partnerships to combat trafficking in persons as part of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which envisions leaving no one behind, including with respect to this particular scourge.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Uruguay.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for convening this high-level meeting and yesterday's speakers for their briefings.

While the concept of slavery as it was known centuries ago has been abolished, we still face what is known as modern slavery. Trafficking in persons, the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, forced labour, forced marriage and debt bondage are some aspects of that scourge, affecting millions of people around the world. For Uruguay, its eradication is an extremely urgent goal and a priority within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7.

Uruguay emphatically condemns trafficking in persons and related crimes that seek to exploit individuals and take advantage of their status or vulnerable situation, which implies disregarding their human nature and human rights. We must focus on the objectives of combating those crimes and guaranteeing the fundamental rights of victims by consolidating prevention and protection measures and mechanisms. Uruguay considers it essential to give priority to the rights of victims of trafficking, who must be at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat that crime in order to protect them, provide them with assistance and reparation, and ensure that their dignity is restored.

It is also essential to guarantee recognition of the universality of human rights, based on the fact that the right to equality and non-discrimination is independent of gender, age, sexual orientation or identity, social, economic or political status, ethnic or racial origin, or other characteristics of the individual and his or her family or community. It should be borne in mind that

no conduct justifies a victim's submission to conditions of exploitation, whether lawful or unlawful, regular or irregular, morally accepted or not by the community in which the act occurred — not even if it was consensual.

Uruguay has made international commitments in joining the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — also known as the Palermo Protocol, which was adopted in 2003. At the national level, Uruguay has been acting in a focused manner, particularly since 2008, with the creation of an inter-institutional round table to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, made up of various governmental bodies and with the participation of organized civil society.

In recent years, the round table has focused its efforts on drafting a comprehensive bill to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, which will soon be brought before Parliament for consideration and approval. In parallel to that process, work is under way to establish a plan to prevent and combat trafficking and exploitation of persons, which will be in force from January 2018. It aims to identify specific and integrated actions in relation to that violation of human rights.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the only way those practices can be prevented, denounced and ultimately eradicated is through the cooperation of all society at the local and national levels. In view of the international dimension of that crime, cooperation among States is also essential to combat trafficking in persons, and to prosecute and condemn those responsible.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we wish to express our country's support for the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

Trafficking in persons is a despicable crime that infringes upon human dignity and constitutes a serious violation of human rights and all legal regulations on that issue. We are concerned about the international increase in that crime, the majority of whose victims are women and children. The various causes of and motivations for such crimes have been exacerbated in recent years by poverty, social exclusion, lack of access to education, high rates of youth unemployment, increasingly restrictive and exclusive immigration policies, inadequate channels for regular migration, and armed conflicts in various regions of the planet.

For Venezuela, prevention is the cornerstone of the fight against trafficking in persons. Therefore, the comprehensive approach to tackling this scourge requires strengthening social policies and the fight against poverty and exclusion in order to prevent vulnerable groups — especially women and children, as well as refugees and migrants — from falling into networks of organized transnational crime

The international community is endowed with strong legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol, that need to be effectively implemented. We also have the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is an important point of reference and progress that sets out international commitments to eliminate this scourge.

In that context, the revision of the Plan that is being implemented this year obliges us to reiterate and strengthen the resolve of all States to fully comply with the indisputable obligation to combat this heinous crime by bolstering its preventive mechanisms, accountability, data and evidence collection, and, above all, a frank and inclusive international dialogue. It is also necessary to recognize the important role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, as well as other entities of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, within the framework of their mandates.

Venezuela stresses that efforts aimed at the effective prevention and eradication of that crime require the non-securitization of the issue and ensuring broad and democratic discussion spaces that ensure the full participation of all Member States of the United Nations. In that regard, Venezuela reiterates its categorical rejection of unilateral reports based on subjective and political perceptions, which weaken multilateralism rather than contributing to its strengthening, and politicize the issue, undermining national and international efforts to fight that crime.

Among the causes and motivations that have exacerbated the rates of this crime in recent years are conflict situations and military invasions, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Military occupation aimed at dismantling the institutions of the country where intervention has taken place leaves the entire population, as well as migrants, refugees and displaced persons at the mercy of criminal gangs who use their tragedy and helplessness to abuse them, turning them into a commodity to be traded, often for the benefit of interest groups or countries that exploit them at will.

The crime of trafficking in persons is not prevalent in Venezuela, and our financial system does not benefit from the profits therefrom. The Venezuelan legal framework related to this matter is contained, in the first instance, in our Constitution, as well as in the different organic laws that ratify the international protocols in the matter.

In conclusion, Venezuela reiterates its commitment to respect and to the promotion and protection of human rights. We also reaffirm our commitment and willingness to continue to fulfil our obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and other international legal instruments related to the subject.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): This meeting is an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our political commitment in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The current large migratory flows confront us with new challenges. They require us to re-evaluate the gaps in prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, namely, the four pillars designated by the United Nations Global Plan of Action. Allow me to raise the following three points.

First, humanitarian crises and armed conflict are particular challenges in the fight against trafficking. Humanitarian actors are increasingly confronted with this phenomenon and have a role to play in prevention and protection. It is important that humanitarian actors, alongside their development partners, strengthen their commitment and coordination in this regard.

Secondly, it must be clearly recognized that forced displacement and migration create particular vulnerabilities and opportunities for trafficking and exploitation, including exploitation through labour. Loss of livelihood, lack of legal access to the labour market and high sums paid to traffickers are but a few of the causes that encourage exploitation through labour. In November 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland participated — with several United Nations agencies and international actors — in a conference on combating trafficking in persons for forced labour along migration routes. On that occasion, the role of the private sector was brought up. Switzerland supports the important work of Ms. Giammarinaro, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, who launched an initiative to strengthen multiparty actions and strategies of the industry coalition.

Thirdly, on 18 October, on the occasion of the European Day for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Switzerland will launch the third week of action against trafficking in human beings. Awareness-raising activities will be organized throughout the country. An excellent example of partnership, the campaign is inspired and coordinated by a group of State actors and civil society.

Finally, I would like to conclude by stressing once again the importance of the ongoing negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The latter represents an opportunity to integrate principles and strategies to combat trafficking in human beings in the international dialogue on migration. Discussions at the start of the month in Vienna at the fifth thematic session on smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims, have already prepared the ground for this.

The role of civil society in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking remains key. We cannot fulfil our mission without it. Thus, Switzerland will contribute up to 80,000 Swiss francs to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its member States (see A/72/PV.24) and welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan

of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Human trafficking is one of the most horrific crimes of our times. It is an open wound on the body of humankind. Sadly, it occurs in every country, every region, all around the world and is therefore a truly outstanding global challenge. Transnational criminal networks take advantage of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of societies. They deprive their victims not only of freedom but also of human dignity.

I am convinced that we cannot win this fight alone. There must be effective cooperation and partnership between the countries of origin, destination and transit, as well as among States, international organizations, civil society and business groups, including through the mechanism of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. Hungary believes in dialogue, in collaboration and coordination between all relevant stakeholders. We have just hosted a panel discussion related to human trafficking on protecting religious minorities and another one, the United Nations Conference of the Global Sustainability Network, which has a growing membership of more than 300 socially conscious philanthropists, businesswomen and men, very influential change-makers, movers and shakers. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade hosted regional consultations for the Workshop of Alliance 8.7 for Europe and Central Asia jointly organized by the International Labour Organization.

We also believe that raising awareness is crucial both at the national and global levels. In that respect, the media, the advocacy groups and civil society are important partners. This is the reason, for example, why I hosted the Foreign Press Association Scholarship Fund Awards in May, addressing the topic of human trafficking and the role of the international media in shining a light on the great moral and societal issues of our times. With the same aim of putting modern slavery in the spotlight, Hungary works together with different media companies, filmmakers and journalists.

Besides empowering all stakeholders so that they become conscious consumers, vigilant law-enforcement officers, trained humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel, dedicated policymakers and safe Internet users, we need to empower the survivors. Today I am asking how we can implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons more effectively. First, our actions need to be tailored to the specific case at hand. Our response has to be gender- and age-sensitive as well as exploitation-type-specific. Secondly, persecution and prevention should go hand in hand. Thirdly, collecting and analysing data is of key importance. Fourthly, investigations into human trafficking should always include parallel and complementary financial investigations of human-trafficking networks. And, fifthly, ensuring accountability is essential. States should step up their efforts aimed at finding perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Our commitment is to keep these issues on the agenda as a priority, and I encourage Member States to engage in strengthened cooperation in law enforcement, investigations and information-sharing. We need a planetary consciousness in this regard. We need to share our information, data and knowledge and start coordinating our actions. Let us work together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Ireland.

Ms. Nason (Ireland): I am here today because my country, Ireland, stands full-square with all who want to bring an end to the scourge of the trafficking of people. We applaud the convening of this meeting to shine a light on the tens of millions of victims worldwide. We also join in solidarity and, importantly, with resolve, to end the horrors of exploitation and abuse endured by those victims.

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24). The European Union and its member States play a leading role globally in working to prevent and combat human trafficking. Ireland also salutes the statement delivered by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24).

Just under one year ago, Ireland adopted a robust national action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking. We worked in consultation with national and international partners, including civil society, to set out a state-of-the-art, clear, collaborative programme to advance the fight against trafficking and also, importantly, to enhance the protection of victims.

Our response to human trafficking benefits from the rigorous domestic scrutiny and international evaluation in which we engage — and I underline — on a regular basis. We have created a dedicated State structure and

enacted and updated major parts of our legislation to implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. But through all of that work, we remain singularly focused on the paramount need to place all victims, but particularly women and girls, who are the majority of victims of trafficking, right at the heart of our response. We have taken a number of very concrete operational steps to achieve that end, and today I will briefly highlight just four of those.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

First, a dedicated anti-human-trafficking unit has been established within our Department of Justice and Equality. That unit is responsible for an across-Government coordination policy and response, bringing together those State and non-State actors I mentioned earlier in partnership.

Secondly, we have in place a centralized human-trafficking investigation and coordination unit within our national police service. The unit has top-level expertise on sex crimes, child protection, Internet exploitation, organized prostitution and associated crimes. It engages actively in international police work aimed at tackling those gangs that engage in trafficking across borders.

Thirdly, we have established a dedicated anti-human-trafficking team within our health service that responds to individual victims with dedicated care plans for them.

Fourthly, we have a responsive national referral mechanism that works for suspected victims of trafficking and looks to their immediate needs and ensures they can avail themselves of ongoing supports to aid in their recovery. Ireland's criminal justice system today also includes prosecution and prevention measures based on our legislation that combats the crime of trafficking but also reduces or aims to reduce the demand for trafficking.

Another important aspect that we believe leads to effective implementation is that we are working on a true partnership basis in which State and non-State agencies come together in a way that allows us to ensure that suspected victims are identified at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, on an ongoing basis, we are improving training for those agencies and non-governmental actors to raise public awareness of the dimensions of this disaster. The anti-trafficking work that we do in our non-governmental sector is supported not just in kind, but also funded by the State in many cases. We see the work in Governmental and non-governmental contexts as absolutely fundamental and complementary. In sum, my country, Ireland, is doing everything in its power to address this horrific scourge.

I want to finish by thanking the President of the General Assembly for organizing this valuable meeting. In particular, I want to echo the Secretary-General in his own powerful concluding remarks yesterday:

> "As long as this crime exists we cannot tell young people that the future will be better than the past. We cannot deliver on a world of hope and opportunity for all, and we dare not look at ourselves without a sense of abiding shame. Now is the time to stand together and stamp out this abominable practice." (*A/72/PV.24, p.3*)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Georgia.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is among the most flagrant violations of human rights of our time. The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons serves as a major framework for promoting a comprehensive, coordinated and consistent response at the national, regional and international levels to counter human trafficking.

As a State signatory to the anti-trafficking protocol, Georgia reiterates its commitment to spare no effort to prevent trafficking, punish the perpetrators and protect the victims. Our policy is focused on the so-called four "Ps": prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. To that end, Georgia has put in place a responsive legislative framework. For example, since 2003, human trafficking has been explicitly criminalized under our criminal code. In 2006, we adopted the law on combating trafficking in human beings, aimed at prevention, protection and prosecution of trafficking offenders. In 2012, that law was amended to provide social and legal protection, assistance and rehabilitation for child victims, in accordance with the recommendation code were refined to streamline the investigation process.

We are aware that combating trafficking in human beings requires concerted inter-agency effort. Therefore, in 2006, we created an inter-agency council

to act as a major shaper of policy in combating human trafficking. The council brings together representatives from all concerned line ministries and agencies, including the Chief Prosecutor's Office and Public Defender's Office, as well as non-governmental and international organizations.

Our national action plan for the period 2017-2018 focuses in particular on proactive methods for identifying victims. To that end, human-trafficking-inspection mobile groups and a related task force were set up, composed of representatives of law-enforcement agencies that regularly operate in high-risk areas. In addition, we have retrained investigators to develop their skills and raise their awareness with regard to human trafficking. As a result, the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions has been increasing annually.

Within the institutional arrangements for protecting and assisting victims of trafficking in persons, the State fund for the protection of and assistance to trafficking victims continues to provide shelters and a crisis centre, legal aid, psychological and medical assistance, and victim rehabilitation and reintegration. We also pay particular attention to the protection of vulnerable groups in the population. Children in street situations are at the centre of our attention. A number of legislative and institutional measures have been taken to provide those children with identification documents, register them for State-run services and promote a prompt response should any violence be committed against them. I would also like to take this opportunity to emphasize that increased international efforts are needed to protect the most vulnerable groups of the population, including internally displaced persons and refugees, from trafficking.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's commitment to further contributing to our joint efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan welcomes the official adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

We associate ourselves with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

We highly value the active role played by, and the contribution of, the United Nations, in particular the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and its coordinator, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in providing specialized assistance to Member States at their request. The 2016 UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* confirms that this scourge is essentially an international phenomenon and that cross-border trafficking in persons is by and large the consequence of general migration flows. According to the 156 Member States that responded, of most of the victims identified worldwide, approximately 60 per cent were foreigners or migrants.

As a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, Kazakhstan supports all international efforts aimed at counteracting this form of modern slavery and calls on all States to fully and effectively implement the Global Plan of Action. Kazakhstan is proud to be one of the contributors to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially for women and children, and calls upon other States for financial support to fight against trafficking in human beings. In December 2012, in his address to the nation on the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, President Nursultan Nazarbayev said, "The State should especially severely punish blatant cases of sexual slavery and attitudes towards women as a commodity."

Recognizing the need to increase the State's response to human trafficking so as to protect the vulnerable and bring perpetrators to justice, the Government of Kazakhstan has developed numerous action plans to combat human trafficking. We are currently implementing the 2015-2017 action plan, which envisages the coherent functioning of all the relevant national agencies and non-governmental organizations, in line with the political will to end impunity for traffickers. To that end, a national inter-agency coordination body has been created. I would like to mention just few measures that Kazakhstan has undertaken to help victims of trafficking.

We have established a national referral mechanism and introduced social standards to assist victims, and we are regulating the identification procedure for victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, our

preventive campaign "Stop Traffic" was carried out in a systematic manner. Our Government regularly keeps track of the activities carried out by modelling, tourist and marriage agencies that offer foreign travel and employment services, and monitors mass media and the Internet with a view to detecting materials related to trafficking in persons and child pornography.

It is important to note that our fight against this heinous crime is centred on human rights. We are party to and implement more than 60 multilateral treaties on human rights, including 13 directly related to counteracting contemporary forms of slavery, and we are ensuring an integrated approach to combating crime. We are implementing a State programme designed to further modernize the law-enforcement system, whose main task is to create by 2020 a system that meets high international standards.

Aware that no single actor can successfully fight human trafficking alone, Kazakhstan is actively cooperating not only with United Nations entities, but also with other international, regional organizations and civil society. Upon Kazakhstan's initiative, the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is planning to conduct a regional multi-stakeholder simulation training exercise on the identification of trafficking in human beings at the Central Asian regional hub for countering global threats next year. We express our deep appreciation for the work being done by the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator.

With financial and technical support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan, the Union of Crisis Centres has been running the national SOS hotline since 2010. The IOM also supported the publication of the first report on combating trafficking in human beings in Kazakhstan, which was prepared by the Commission on Human Rights, under the President of Kazakhstan.

We hope today's discussions of the United Nations Global Plan of Action will help to fulfil our intention to turn our words into decisive, concerted action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their comprehensive reports. On behalf of my country, I welcome the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

The United Arab Emirates deals seriously with the issue of trafficking in persons, not only at the national level but throughout the world, based on our conviction that trafficking in persons constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights and a serious form of disregard for human, religious and cultural values. Because the United Arab Emirates hosts a significant number of temporary workers of many different nationalities each year, we have committed to working tirelessly to combat this crime and counter criminal gangs.

The United Arab Emirates launched its campaign to address this crime both nationally and internationally in 2006, when it started a comprehensive anti-trafficking campaign and enacted a federal law on combating trafficking in persons. This law was amended in 2015 to provide greater guarantees for victims of human trafficking, in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

In 2008, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established. It includes representatives from Government agencies and civil-society organizations and aims at coordinating efforts to combat human trafficking crimes, strengthening strategic plans at various levels and enabling the authorities to enforce laws and implement preventive and deterrent measures.

The United Arab Emirates has adopted a national strategy that comprises several aspects. In terms of prevention and prohibition, the United Arab Emirates has enacted laws and legislation to combat the trafficking of persons. These laws are regularly updated to keep them in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and relevant international legislation. As part of the efforts to prevent and enhance awareness of this crime, a diploma programme on anti-trafficking is being offered in the United Arab Emirates. The programme deals with the crime of human trafficking using a scientific approach.

In terms of prosecution and punishment, the United Arab Emirates is committed to pursuing and prosecuting the perpetrators of human trafficking. The

efforts of national law-enforcement agencies have led to the arrest of 106 traffickers to date.

As to protecting and supporting victims of human trafficking, the United Arab Emirates has provided protection for and guaranteed the legal and human rights of the victims of trafficking and exploitation through State-sponsored shelters and rehabilitation centres. The United Arab Emirates has also arranged for and facilitated continued residency in the country or return to their countries of origin of victims, according to their circumstances, while ensuring their safety and security.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance and effectiveness of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to address this global scourge and will continue to cooperate with the international community through the exchange of information and statistics so as to develop best practices and experiences in that regard. In addition, the United Arab Emirates is pleased to announce its pledge of $100,000 in financial support for the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in order to ensure that the fight against trafficking remains a common goal and shared objective for all the nations of the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2010, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We reaffirm our commitment to systematically and forcefully condemning trafficking.

Trafficking in persons continues to be a serious problem for humankind. It requires a concerted international response as well as efforts by States to develop and implement effective measures for combating and eliminating trafficking in all of its forms and to strengthen existing measures to eliminate the demand for victims of trafficking. The Constitution of Honduras states that,

> "The human person is the supreme goal of society and the State. Everyone has the obligation to respect and protect it. The dignity of the human being is inviolable."

We acknowledge that all anti-trafficking measures and initiatives must not discriminate or fail to take gender equality into account, tailoring its approach to the needs of women and children.

As a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and in line with those obligations, Honduras has had legislation against trafficking in place since 2012. This legislation penalizes all forms of the crime, including the recruitment of young people for criminal activities.

It is important to highlight the fact that the United Nations has taken note of the decline of the homicide rate in Honduras. During his visit to the country in January 2015, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the Government's measures to improve the security situation and noted that the homicide rate had significantly decreased since 2013 — from 86 homicides out of every 100,000 people to 66. Furthermore, the Government of the Republic created an inter-institutional commission against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons that comprises Government institutions and civil-society organizations that play a key role in preventing and combating human trafficking. In addition, a plan of action has been developed and implemented and will remain in force until 2022.

In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, we committed to using all of the means at our disposal to strive to counter the abuses and exploitation that countless refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations are suffering. The journeys that are being undertaken every day increase the likelihood that these people will fall victim to criminal groups. Consequently, Honduras has implemented measures to improve the identification and protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking. One such measure is the strengthening of consular offices on the migratory route in Mexico and the United States of America.

We should not forget that the purpose of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is to establish and promote global, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime more effectively. Accordingly, we acknowledge that if countries act in a coordinated manner, criminal networks will ultimately be undone.

The Acting President: I now give the floor the Chair of the delegation of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important high-level meeting.

Viet Nam welcomes the adoption of resolution 72/1, on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that violates human rights and human dignity and poses a serious challenge to peace, security and development. Viet Nam strongly condemns and resolutely combats trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and related transnational crimes, by implementing various comprehensive policies and measures, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, I would like to highlight five of those policies and measures.

First, we have already ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Our Government has amended the national penal code to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms. We have established an inter-agency mechanism for coordination and are implementing a national four-year anti-trafficking action plan for 2016-2020, with a focus on preventing, investigating, prosecuting and punishing crimes of trafficking in persons and on assisting victims.

Secondly, to address the root causes of the problem, we have actively implemented numerous programmes on poverty reduction, education, employment, female empowerment and child protection. Using the media and the Internet, we have made great efforts to raise people's awareness, particularly among potential victims and in areas where human traffickers are active.

Thirdly, trafficked victims are placed at the centre of our policies and actions. We have established hotlines to receive information and created temporary shelters to protect and assist victims. Support is provided to victims to help them rebuild their lives through various rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, including food and medical services, vocational training and psychological counselling, and legal consultations.

Fourthly, we impose severe and punitive measures to combat the horrendous trafficking phenomenon. Perpetrators are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced, receiving punishment in the form of three to 20 years of imprisonment.

Fifthly, we attach great importance to regional approaches and mechanisms and actively promote the implementation of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We have also signed anti-trafficking memorandums of understanding with China and Cambodia with a view to cooperating in the identification of victims and the prosecution of traffickers.

Trafficking in persons affects almost all countries, be they countries of origin, transit or destination. We call on the global community to enhance cooperation to combat trafficking in persons, as no country can do it alone.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Viet Nam's commitment to working closely with the United Nations and other partners to turn our declaration into actions that end this heinous crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of El Salvador.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to be able to address this high-level meeting to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

El Salvador welcomes the significant progress made at the regional and global levels in combating human trafficking. At the same time, it recognizes that we continue to face numerous challenges in terms of successfully combating this global scourge and attending effectively and expeditiously to its victims.

We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any discrimination whatsoever, while placing special emphasis on the protection and restitution of the rights of victims of trafficking. In that regard, El Salvador, through its 2003 ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, undertook significant steps towards preventing, investigating and punishing the crime of human

trafficking, and towards focusing on restoring victims' rights.

In 2004, trafficking in persons was added to the penal code, and, in 2005 the national committee against trafficking in persons was established. The committee was operational until 2011, when it was replaced by the national council against trafficking in persons, to become the office responsible for the prevention of trafficking and the comprehensive care of victims. In 2012, the council adopted our national policy against trafficking in persons, which set guidelines for the institutions responsible for its implementation and ensured the formulation and implementation of a national plan.

In 2014, the special law against trafficking in persons was adopted. The law went into effect in January 2015 and established the modalities of action for the national policy against trafficking in persons, thereby reinforcing the ways in which the policy against trafficking, which had already been in force since 2012, could be implemented. This normative framework promotes concrete actions designed to identify possible cases of human trafficking through awareness-raising activities as well as to prevent such cases. The framework also comprises concrete measures focused on providing care for victims as well as protecting and restoring their rights — the ultimate goal in that regard being the unconditional respect for human rights that have been violated.

We have also run campaigns, such as the "The path of life is not always what you may imagine" and "Trafficking in women is a crime: let us raise our voice" campaigns, which were launched in cooperation with the regional coalition against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Similarly, the Attorney General's Office is now endowed with a specialized prosecutorial unit for crimes involving illegal trafficking and trafficking in persons. The Office has also established an alert system called "Missing Angel", which helps to locate children and adolescents who have disappeared, possibly owing to trafficking in persons. The system provides the public with a toll-free telephone number for people to call and report cases of trafficking.

Trafficking in persons affects practically all countries of the world, whether they are a point of origin, transit or destination, It is therefore important that we coordinate efforts to combat this crime, bring about a more effective implementation of the Protocol at the national level, and show greater cooperation at both national and international levels.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this extremely important high-level meeting.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). For us, the declaration represents an important step forward in finding a collective response to this multidimensional phenomenon. We should also strive to achieve the rapid implementation of the goals set forth in the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, contained in resolution 64/293, as well as the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, in particular Goal 8 and target 8.7.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has ratified a number of declarations aimed at combating this phenomenon, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Furthermore, in 2007, we adopted a national law to combat trafficking in persons. This law defines what constitutes human trafficking and entails severe punishments for any individual or entity guilty of exploiting or trafficking workers. We have also established a national commission aimed at combating human trafficking, which is an effective mechanism for ensuring the physical and mental well-being of victims and providing them with the physical protection they need.

In 2015, we inaugurated a service and support centre for foreigners as well as a hotline in eight different languages for people to report cases of trafficking. We also published a guide that was translated into various languages and distributed to foreign workers upon their arrival in the Kingdom to inform them of their rights and the communications channels open to them. Furthermore, the national committee to combat trafficking in persons set up a national programme to bring together the relevant authorities to address cases of human trafficking. It is a unique system at the regional level which allows us to reinforce measures taken at the international level by defining the roles of the various parts of the mechanism that deals

with presumed or proven cases of human trafficking, including their prosecution. An executive office was also established, bringing together representatives of various Government and other public entities, and is aimed at ensuring cooperation with the private sector, as well as raising awareness. Given the scope of the phenomenon, we have organized a number of various activities, seminars, conferences and workshops on the subject so as to raise awareness.

We are well aware of the harmful effects of armed conflict in various regions throughout the world and their implications in terms of human trafficking in particular and of human rights in general. We therefore firmly believe in the peaceful resolution of conflicts so as to help us combat trafficking and allow victims to recover their rights and ensure their well-being. My country was one of the first to support the call for action to end forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons. We remain committed to ending that phenomenon.

We reiterate the importance of cooperation among Member States, agencies and the relevant authorities, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and all other relevant United Nations agencies. Such cooperation will allow us to respond rapidly to the challenges we face. Cooperation in implementing the Global Plan of Action, including in collecting, analysing and sharing data, will enable States, non-governmental organizations and international agencies to share necessary information in a focused and timely manner, thereby enabling the relevant authorities to respond effectively to the phenomenon of human trafficking, raising awareness among the public in general, facilitating the prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes, and supporting the process of identifying victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Foreign Secretary of Maldives.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): Let me express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this very crucial and timely meeting. This is an important opportunity to generate further political momentum for the rapid implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

It is also timely against a backdrop where millions of people are moving across the globe in the hope of escaping poverty and conflict but are increasingly and unwillingly falling into the hands of smugglers and traffickers. Trafficking in persons is an inhumane and criminal activity that tears families apart and fuels violence. It is a transnational organized crime that targets the most vulnerable.

Despite the inherently cruel nature of the crime, the increased number of trafficking cases is alarming. There are more than 500 trafficking flows in operation today, moving men, women, and children within and across borders. It is estimated that a disturbing 79 per cent of trafficking victims are women and children. When women and children are lured by promises of decent employment, they are sexually exploited and tortured if they try to escape. This is modern slavery, and slavery should not be allowed in our modern civilized world.

It is for that reason that we, as Member States, must do more. The Government of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom remains committed to the global fight to prevent trafficking in persons in line with the Global Plan of Action. Last year, the Maldives acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in an effort to reinforce the implementation of existing instruments against trafficking in persons.

As required by the Anti-Trafficking Act of the Maldives enacted in 2013, an Oversight Committee has been established to steer policy effectively and implement legislation. In a further effort to address the issue comprehensively, the first National Action Plan to prevent trafficking in persons was formulated for the period 2015-2019. The Plan underscores the necessity of strengthening partnerships with the international community in order to combat that crime.

The Government of Maldives is at present conducting new baseline studies in collaboration with international partners so that we can better understand the problem. At the same time, we are strengthening our training programmes so that law-enforcement agencies are better equipped and can create the know-how to better identify victims. We have also established a mechanism to provide support and shelter for victims. As a result of those efforts, the Maldives has achieved recognition and recently gained more credibility under international benchmark-setting platforms.

Trafficking in persons must be addressed in a multidisciplinary and comprehensive manner. The

Government of Maldives is in complete agreement that the Global Action Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should go hand in hand, and we recognize that the specific targets of the 2030 Agenda will help to implement the Global Action Plan more rapidly and effectively. We are also of the view that the menace of human trafficking can be eradicated only if we, the Member States, join hands to strengthen our partnership coordination efforts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland): Iceland is pleased to participate in today's meeting, as it gives us an opportunity to restate our firm commitment to the fight against human trafficking. It is a particularly cruel crime to prey on those who cannot defend themselves and to separate them from their loved ones for the purpose of benefiting from their vulnerability.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Person is a vital complement to the important legal standards of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Together those documents create a framework for our joint action to combat trafficking through prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships.

No country in the world is immune to trafficking in human beings, and that includes my own country, Iceland. That speaks to the importance of prevention as a key part of our efforts, responding to demands that cannot be neglected. We also need to train our police officers, airport staff and even flight attendants to recognize the signs of human trafficking in close cooperation with civil-society partners working on that issue. Combating human trafficking requires the awareness of society as a whole if we are to effectively address it.

It is also important to underline in this forum not only cooperation on this topic but also the important role that regional actors play in coordinating action. I would here like to highlight the important work that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is undertaking to address trafficking, both as a security threat and as a human rights issue.

Let us not forget the victims and survivors, who face multiple forms of discrimination owing to their status, hampering their ability to seek justice. In Iceland we recently opened a one-stop shop offering free comprehensive services for victims and survivors of abuse, including trafficking, bringing all actors together in support of those affected. We must seek innovative ways to assist those who have been subjected to that heinous crime and ensure that their human rights are protected.

Trafficking is a classic example of an issue that requires cooperation across borders. Let us work across all barriers to eradicate that terrible crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Tiare (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso welcomes this high-level meeting of the General Assembly and also welcomes yesterday's adoption by consensus of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

In adopting the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons on 12 August 2010, the international community made promoting the universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime one of its objectives. That includes the additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as well as the relevant international instruments related to human trafficking and the national, regional and international promotion of comprehensive, coherent and consistent action against that crime.

But where are we today, seven years after the adoption of this Global Plan of Action? That is an important question that needs to be asked, as the Plan must be regularly assessed, so that we can identify its achievements, shortcomings and prospects in order to better fight trafficking in persons.

Still today, human beings — particularly women and children — continue to be subjected to violence of all kinds throughout the world. That is the bitter truth. Burkina Faso, considered a transit and transfer country, has not been spared the phenomenon of human trafficking, and voted in 2008 — before the Global Plan of Action was even adopted in 2010 — to pass a law in favour of fighting trafficking in persons and similar practices.

We also committed, alongside other States affected by that issue, to an agreement at the regional and subregional levels in collaboration with international organizations with the aim of eradicating that form of modern slavery. In addition to legislative and regulatory measures, the Government is undertaking a wide range of awareness-raising activities to deter, unmask, apprehend and prosecute those who seek to profit from trafficking in their fellow human beings.

Such actions are being carried out by regional vigilance and surveillance committees throughout the 13 regions and provincial oversight committees in the 45 provinces. Those committees, composed of regional and provincial officials and community leaders, are responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating regional programmes and plans relating to the fight against trafficking in persons.

Effective enforcement of human-trafficking legislation is a major challenge to our efforts to end trafficking in persons. That is why Burkina Faso remains convinced that no single country can win that fight alone — it requires a synergy of actions among States in addition to existing national legislative and regulatory measures.

In that context, Burkina Faso welcomes the adoption of the political declaration and reiterates its readiness to work continuously with other Member States for the successful implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Rutikanga (Rwanda): I thank the President for convening this important high-level meeting.

It is now seven years since the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/293, aptly entitled the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It is therefore worth assembling today to reflect and, most important, appraise how far we have moved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Trafficking in persons is a kind of transnational organized crime. As it is, to a large extent, transnational in nature, it necessitates national, regional and global strategies to combat, prevent and suppress it. Rwanda is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its subsequent Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Building on those tools and guided by resolution 72/1, which includes the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which we adopted yesterday, we have the necessary framework and tools to effectively trace the human-trafficking lords. As the Secretary-General commented yesterday, we have not yet imprisoned the human-trafficking lords. Likewise, we have not seen human-trafficking proceeds freeze. We should be able to cut the flows of illicit money to those criminals. Unless we treat the beneficiaries of that abominable crime as high-profile criminals and develop legally binding instruments and effective mechanisms to track them, freeze and confiscate theirs assets and hold them accountable for their crimes, we will not put an end to that heinous crime.

Our experience shows that most of the victims are young people. They fall into the human-trafficking trap by being deceived and promised decent jobs in the countries of destination. Poverty, unemployment, marginalization and many other issues that fuel the problem have been mentioned. In that respect, we need to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goal commitments — to provide decent job opportunities, empower young people, enhance gender empowerment and create equal opportunities for all. That will effectively reduce people's vulnerability to trafficking.

In Rwanda, we are cooperating with other Member States in the region and beyond through special law-enforcement agencies, non-State organizations such as INTERPOL, and other United Nations organs on how we can collectively combat that vice. In August 2016, Rwanda law-enforcement agents, in partnership with INTERPOL, conducted an assimilated exercise session against transnational crimes such as terrorism, the narcotics trade and human trafficking, in which 13 countries from the region participated. The purpose of the exercise was to reach a harmonized level of understanding of the nature of human trafficking and forge a harmonized administrative procedure in combating human trafficking.

The Rwanda National Police and Rwanda Immigration closely cooperate with their counterpart institutions in the region. Rwanda law-enforcement agents closely collaborate with the Uganda police and Kenya police. As a result, between 2014 and 2016, 150 victims were prevented from being trafficked.

My country has initiated public-awareness campaigns and programmes, and all relevant organs are cooperating to design outreach programmes. We have also established a mechanism to protect victims, witnesses and whistle-blowers. The Government established the Isange one-stop centre as a rehabilitation centre for all victims of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, which helps the victims who have been affected by the scourge of human trafficking.

Finally, human trafficking is mostly transnational in nature. Along with the other bilateral arrangements that exist among Member States to combat human trafficking, we should not forget to make use of INTERPOL platforms and databases. INTERPOL tools, such as the I-24/7 system, certainly provide critical information securely and in a short period of time.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): Human trafficking pollutes our surroundings. Bangladesh welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We thank the Permanent Representatives of Belgium and Qatar for accommodating some of our concerns.

In today's conflict situations, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons remain at a heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation. Indeed, human trafficking during conflicts, including by terrorists, has emerged as one of the most serious human rights issues of our time.

In the last month, Bangladesh has witnessed an unprecedented influx of nearly 500,000 people — mostly Rohingyas from Myanmar's Rakhine state. We remain concerned by the possibility of the large number of women and children in that group falling prey to traffickers and people-smugglers who operate regionally. In order to avoid a repeat of the Andaman Sea crisis in 2015, we urge Myanmar to address the root causes of the dire situation in Rakhine state and all regional countries to remain vigilant against organized criminal networks and prevent them from taking advantage of the dark humanitarian situation prevailing in the area.

In view of our situation, as a country of origin, transit and destination, our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, maintains a zero-tolerance approach to trafficking in persons and people smuggling. Bangladesh has enacted the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act of 2012 and has adopted a national plan of action for 2015 to 2017 to implement a comprehensive law. We remain focused on further improving our prevention capacity through data collection, anti-trafficking information campaigns with the help of non-governmental organization partnerships and with the prosecution and early conclusion of trafficking cases.

At the regional level, we have spearheaded initiatives to broaden and institutionalize the scope of counter-trafficking operations under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. Bangladesh remains active within the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and, during the General Assembly high-level week, joined the United Kingdom's call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7.

Bangladesh also underscores the need for reducing cross-border trafficking flows as part of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We joined the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 to that end. With regard to implementing the Global Plan of Action, we urge the Secretary-General to enhance the profile, relevance and visibility of the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons for Member States, including through the possibility of designating a high-level focal person.

The Security Council's political and humanitarian consideration of specific conflict situations should be informed by evidence on any emerging trend in trafficking in persons and related crimes. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons needs to be supported in a sustained and predictable manner. Despite significant gains in the legal sphere, the rate of prosecution and conviction still remains relatively low around the world. We urge Member States to continue working on developing effective intelligence networks at the regional and international levels to monitor and intercept human trafficking and related crimes, including illicit financial flows.

In conclusion, Bangladesh reaffirms its commitment to work together with Member States to further strengthen the United Nations coordinated response and action against trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Trafficking in persons is a significant problem at the global level from which no country is immune. China strongly condemns trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and calls upon the international community to focus its efforts on the following areas:

First, it is essential to comprehensively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promote economic and social development, work to eradicate poverty, and uphold equity and justice in order to eliminate the breeding ground for the crime of human trafficking.

Secondly, it is essential to establish and improve working mechanisms that are led by Governments and ensure the participation of the whole of society with a view to preventing and combating human trafficking and providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims, with the goal of forming a well-functioning society-wide management setup.

Thirdly, it is essential to strengthen international cooperation in law enforcement, fully leverage the role of regional and subregional organizations, exchange intelligence and information in a timely manner, effectively conduct mutual assistance in criminal justice and severely punish perpetrators of human trafficking.

Fourthly, it is essential to effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of victims and work harder to provide them with rescue and relief, protection, rehabilitation and settlement, with the focus on helping them get reintegrated into families and societies.

Attaching great importance to combating human trafficking, the Chinese Government has been working hard to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2007 and 2013 respectively, the Chinese Government promulgated and started implementing the Plan of Action against Trafficking in Women and Children in China (2008-2012) and the Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in China (2013-2020). In 2009, in a bid to refine the existing working mechanism featuring Government leadership and broad-based social participation, an Interministerial Joint Meeting System for Combating Human Trafficking, consisting of 33 departments, was established under the State Council of China, thus providing a solid systemic guarantee for preventing and combating trafficking in persons and assisting and protecting the victims.

Combating trafficking in persons is an urgent common task for the international community. China stands ready to work with other Member States and make concerted efforts to comprehensively implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (A/72/1), thus contributing to the harmony and shared progress of humankind.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Khaqani (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation thanks everyone who has contributed actively to the drawing up of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Member States managed to reach a consensus after long deliberations on the paragraphs of the declaration, which are of great concern given the sensitive nature of this subject for some countries affected by trafficking in persons. They are also of concern for other countries that face terrorism and believe that that subject has become one of the tools used by terrorist organizations to achieve inhuman objectives.

Iraq has expressed its position on the need to indicate clearly in one of the paragraphs of the declaration the increasing relationship between terrorists and human trafficking. We have indicated that the political declaration expresses the political will at the international level to combat intercontinental terrorism, which threatens secure societies. We have also stressed the importance of banning human trafficking and not allowing terrorist groups to take hostages from one country to another. It is therefore a common responsibility. We must work together to fight that phenomenon. Trafficking in persons and other violations and abuses are committed by terrorists to enslave people and to exact servitude and sexual exploitation. Those are the methods that we see at work in the region.

Iraq has suffered from such crimes, which are being committed by terrorist groups such as Da'esh. Those terrorist groups have kidnapped thousands of Iraqi citizens, in particular innocent women and children from among the Yazidis. They have been reduced to slaves and have been the subject of the worst forms of degrading and inhuman treatment. Given our responsibilities to bring the perpetrators of the worst crimes against the Iraqi people, my country, Iraq, to justice, working with its international partners, wrote a letter to the Secretary-General on 9 August 2017 asking for international assistance. The Security Council also adopted resolution 2379 (2017), which called for the gathering of evidence, for reinforcing capacity-building and for ensuring the prosecution of Da'esh fighters.

Iraq has therefore made a crucial contribution towards accountability and towards ensuring that criminals are tried and justice provided to victims. We call for Member States to implement the relevant resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 2195 (2014), in which the Council expressed its concern about exploitation by terrorist groups, organized crime groups and weapons traffickers.

We also call on all States to discharge their commitment to strengthen their efforts to identify trafficking operations and to stop them by any means necessary. We call for people to fight that phenomenon through constructive cooperation between all countries at the political, economic and security levels. We are dealing with a global phenomenon. No country can fight it effectively if the international community does not demonstrate its clear will to act together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), following resolution 64/293, of 2010. It is a demonstration of the strong political will on the part of the international community to take action and put an end to such heinous crimes. Such phenomena pose a threat to human beings and are gravely concerning for the international community, since they constitute a violation of human dignity and fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, recent terrorist groups have practiced various forms of modern slavery on a major scale and in a systematic manner. The worst kind of trafficking in persons affects the rights of people of all ethnic groups and all religions. That is why the international community must combat such phenomena effectively through all means possible. Trafficking in persons heightens conflicts, especially those of a religious and ethnic nature. It also leads to violent reactions and a serious downward spiral of violence, against which the international community must fight.

The unprecedented waves of refugees throughout the world have led to a large number of victims of trafficking, according to the annual report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The increase was seen primarily in countries experiencing conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq and Somalia, but also in Europe, Asia and other countries in the Middle East. That is why we must reach political solutions in order to end all such conflicts and ensure that people are given back their dignity. Our duty as members of the international community is to address such phenomena from a global perspective and not to focus only on hotspots on the planet. We must also work at a regional level to counter such phenomena.

International and interregional groups such as the Human Security Network, of which Jordan is a member, play an essential role when it comes to awareness-raising and cooperation. What we are dealing with is not just a political issue; trafficking also affects development. In the framework of our efforts, we must take into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially when it comes to achieving SDG 16, aimed at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for all, where human beings are free from violence and fear.

Jordan believes that we can redouble our efforts to combat the smuggling of migrants, for which Da'esh is responsible in my particular region. We need national, regional and international efforts to fight terrorism and extremism. Young men and women, as well as women and children, need to become aware. We also need to provide technical assistance to the countries in need of such assistance in order to create a global preventive strategy. We can never sufficiently emphasize the linkage between trafficking, on the one hand, and terrorism and extremism, on the other. We must cooperate in the exchange of information and capacity-building with the assistance of international institutions, in particular UNODC, which plays an essential role in that area.

Particular importance is attached to rehabilitating victims who have been forced to rebuild their lives. In that regard, we must also give special attention to women and children. Trafficking is a crime under the Jordanian criminal court code. We ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, adopted in Palermo, Italy, to put an end to contemporary slavery and trafficking in persons.

We are working to expose all forms of trafficking in persons by establishing a national commission with a view to bringing together representatives of the various ministries and competent authorities. We have also formed a unit against human trafficking, so that the legal system can implement the strategy established in 2010-2012, which makes it possible to bolster the capacity of judges and enables victims to recover their rights, especially victims of forced labour.

We have, furthermore, created a national commission against trafficking in persons with a hotline number, which makes it possible for victims to reach the authorities in the event of abuse. We have a national mechanism that makes it possible to bring all cases of trafficking to justice, as well as to provide shelters for victims. Additionally, we have a national strategy until 2025 that makes it possible to reinforce our actions towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, we have created a rehabilitation centre, which we have named the "House of Dignity". It is under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Services.

We are also coordinating the efforts of our national authorities, in cooperation with the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, to respond to the particular needs of Syrian refugees and their children with a view to providing them with all of the social and psychological support they need, with the assistance of UNICEF. We will continue our efforts to counter trafficking in persons, especially the crimes committed by terrorist organizations. We are willing to cooperate with all regional and international authorities in order to put a stop to such phenomena and to respond to their consequences, as well as to prevent them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Almunaikh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to welcome the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), adopted by the General Assembly yesterday morning. My delegation would like to express its deep thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of our brother countries of Qatar and Belgium for their efforts as co-facilitators of the political declaration. Their efforts helped us reach a consensus on the text.

Trafficking in persons has become a growing concern for humankind at large in recent times. It is a form of modern slavery and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Trafficking in persons is an international phenomenon. It knows no specific country. It crosses borders and reaches new countries. It takes various forms and displays various patterns. The perceptions of States with regard to the notion of trafficking in persons differ according to the level of respect for human rights, customs, traditions, culture, criminal legislation and the political regime of the country.

The State of Kuwait believes in identifying the root causes behind the increase in the phenomenon of trafficking in persons, which include a number of social, economic, cultural, political and other factors. Such factors make people vulnerable to trafficking, as they include poverty, unemployment, inequality, conflicts, disasters, sexual violence, gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization.

My delegation stresses that Kuwait is committed to promoting and protecting human rights and continuing the fight against trafficking in persons. Here I would like to highlight briefly the actions and procedures undertaken by Kuwait, including the enactment of legislation, that demonstrate our steadfast will to fight such crime and deter the ill-intended people who are involved in perpetuating crimes of trafficking in persons.

First, Law No. 109 of 2013 provides for the establishment of the National Labour Force Agency, which is tasked with drafting rules and regulations guaranteeing the rights of migrant workers. Secondly, we are setting up temporary shelters for workers in line with the international conventions ratified by Kuwait. That action aims at providing the protection and full care of workers, as well as at helping them return to their countries.

Thirdly, we are implementing the 2013 Act on combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of workers. It is a new step for us to uphold the rights

of migrant workers, whether in the international or domestic sectors. The law includes severe punishment of up to 15 years of imprisonment for those who are proved to be involved in the commission of such crimes. The reason for those measures is to ensure that traffickers do not enjoy impunity.

Fourthly, regarding the 2015 regulation on fighting cybercrimes, clause 8 of that legislation makes criminally liable any person who creates a website or spreads information by using the Internet or any other means of information communication technology for the purpose of trafficking in persons or facilitating their exploitation.

My country's efforts are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8 and 12. Furthermore, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, visited Kuwait upon an invitation from the State in 2016 to assess the situation and our institutional and legislative framework. In her report of 14 September 2016, which she presented at the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, she stressed that Kuwait has proved its commitment to fighting trafficking in persons and that Kuwait was a model to be followed in the region and beyond. She further commended our institutional and legal framework in the area of labour, the private sector, domestic service and child labour.

Recently, my country joined the International Migration Organization (IMO) as an observer. My country believes in the role of the IMO in fighting all forms of trafficking in persons. Kuwait effectively cooperates with the IMO to fight that phenomenon by holding educational and awareness-raising seminars on the matter.

Concurrent with our meeting today, the Government of Kuwait is considering the adoption of a national strategy to fight trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, with representation from ministries and various other sectors. The strategy is based on three pillars, namely, prevention, protection and partnerships, in addition to cooperation at the local and regional levels. In conclusion, we must underscore that despite all international efforts to address the phenomenon, it remains a paramount challenge that requires increased concerted efforts from the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), and we appreciate this opportunity to share some of what we are doing to combat human trafficking.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines established an anti-trafficking-in-persons unit in 2012. That unit carries out many activities, which include the sensitization of more than 30,000 students and over 3,000 teachers, in a population of 110,000 people; the sensitization of key stakeholders, such as churches, non-governmental organizations and law enforcement; media outreach; and the investigation of more than 10 potential cases of human trafficking, with one arrest made in 2015.

We have strengthened our legislative framework to combat human trafficking. We have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (resolution 55/25). There is coordination across ministries and departments to ensure that we adhere to that and other international plans aimed at combating human trafficking. Our Parliament has recently revised the Immigration Restriction Act to criminalize the smuggling of migrants. That amendment will complement the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011.

In February, using technical assistance received through the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States on the one hand, and the European Community and its member States, on the other hand, and the International Organization for Migration, we made further progress in the form of a revised national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and formulated a data-gathering tool on trafficking in persons.

There is need for coordination internationally. Through bilateral cooperation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been a part of rescue operations for some of its own citizens who have been trafficked abroad. No country is immune to human trafficking, and we are doing our utmost to fight any sign of infection. We believe that one case of human trafficking on our

shores is one case too many, and we will continue to use all tools at our disposal to close all potential avenues for traffickers. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply committed to the fight against trafficking in persons and expresses solidarity with the victims and survivors of such heinous crimes.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Ms. Bassols Delgado (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the political statement made yesterday on this topic by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting devoted to the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and for giving greater visibility to that international scourge. We are also grateful to the facilitators and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their work during the negotiations on the recent adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

In the interest of time, I will focus my statement on five very specific points. First, trafficking in persons constitutes one of the most fundamental attacks on human rights, affecting women, children and men. Trafficking also entails clandestine activity, about which there is limited information or knowledge. Furthermore, it is the result of very complex worldwide problems involving social, economic, health, political and legal factors. If we therefore want our appraisal exercises to have an effect, we will have to address the phenomenon of trafficking comprehensively.

Secondly, the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons must be revitalized so that we can make progress in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals related to combating trafficking, as well as in dealing with all of the aspects related to prevention, impunity and victims' needs. Cooperation among of all the relevant bodies is, therefore, crucial.

Thirdly, trafficking requires a specific response when it occurs in the context of conflict situations, because, in such cases, the national criminal justice system is affected. Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), which was sponsored by Spain, calls for the taking of measures by a number of United Nations bodies, Member States and other stakeholders that can help advance efforts to combat trafficking in persons in conflict-affected areas. That resolution highlighted the undoubtedly perverse relationship linking trafficking, sexual violence in conflict, organized crime and terrorist funding. In that vein, we welcome the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), because we believe that it will truly help efforts to hold those responsible for the crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq accountable.

Fourthly, Spain believes that we must redouble our national efforts. The existing relevant conventions and protocols must be complemented with an exchange of views on our best practices and national policies. Last week in this very Hall, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain proposed establishing an international network of anti-trafficking coordinators (see A/72/PV.14).

Fifthly, I would like to highlight the fact that Spain is developing a firm and comprehensive policy to combat trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal and trafficking in human organs. Upon the initiative of Spain and Guatemala, the General Assembly recently adopted resolution 71/322, which is aimed at promoting organ donations and transplant systems that follow clinical, ethical and altruistic criteria. Spain has been very successful in that area, and we are ready and willing to share our experience with everyone.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I concluded without pledging to continue our firm commitment and efforts in the Human Rights Council aimed at combating trafficking in persons, should we be elected to that body on 16 October. We are also determined to work closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the other relevant bodies of the United Nations system that are engaged in combating — in our view — one of the major scourges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Valastro (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): It is my pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies representing the world's 190 national societies and their 13 million community-based volunteers.

As a first principle, when it comes to confronting trafficking, we should set as our primary goal doing what we can to prevent trafficking from occurring, as well as protecting and supporting those at risk. Our organization welcomes the fact that the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) reaffirms the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relating to combating all forms of trafficking in persons. We note, as well, that the political declaration refers to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which recognizes that refugees and migrants in large movements are at greater risk of being trafficked. It is our hope that the eventual adoption of a global compact on migration will provide the opportunity to find agreement on basic principles after decades of work.

Let me offer a few examples from within our network. The British and Australian Red Cross Societies operate programmes where people who have experienced trafficking are provided with accommodations, material support and a caseworker. The goal is to provide assistance addressing the unique vulnerabilities and risk factors of those who have been trafficked, and give them the time and support needed to decide the subsequent steps they would like to take. However, offering such services is worth little if the people whom we seek to help are too afraid to reach out to us. Supporting them means ensuring safe channels to access basic services and report abuse, irrespective of the legal status of such migrants. In particular, we call on States to ensure that vulnerable migrants have safe and confidential access to such support, without obliging them to choose specific service providers or disclose their legal status.

Secondly, we must keep our eyes wide open with regard to signs suggesting trafficking. Along any migratory trail, officials and organizations must actively be on the lookout for potential indicators of trafficking. States should also ensure that any person who has experienced trafficking or is at risk of exploitation is safely identified and referred to the appropriate sources of humanitarian support and assistance. It is only by working together, from cross-border collaboration to the provision of humanitarian support for those who have been trafficked and addressing the systemic drivers of trafficking and labour exploitation, that we can end trafficking. Most importantly, we must work with those who have experienced trafficking to understand those driving factors, how to protect the most vulnerable and how we can assist those who have experienced trafficking or exploitation so that they can rebuild their lives.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the delegation that wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mrs. Mozolina (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We will try to be brief. We would have preferred not to respond to the statement made by the representative of the Ukrainian delegation. Nevertheless, we believe that we need to respond to the attacks that were addressed to us in a statement.

We should bear in mind that, since the beginning of the 1990s, Ukraine has consistently performed poorly in terms of forced labour and human trafficking. According to data from the International Organization for Migration, Ukraine is one of the largest providers of slave labour in Europe. Since 1991, 160,000 Ukrainians have been victims of human trafficking. Of course, given the domestic armed conflict, for which the responsibility lies with the authorities in Kyiv, the situation has become particularly threatening.

I will now provide some other facts. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has repeatedly stated that Ukrainian displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. First and foremost that is because of economic difficulties caused by Kyiv's actions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also provided information in his report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, including facts about women who were forced into prostitution with Ukrainian soldiers to ensure the survival of their families.

We encourage the Ukrainian authorities to consider once again that the introduction of a transport blockade in the south-east of the country and stopping social welfare benefit payments in that region has allowed crime-related business to flourish in the area, making those sections of the Ukrainian population the group

most vulnerable to human trafficking. Unfortunately, however, the Ukrainian delegation prefers to identify those outside of its borders, particularly in Russia, as the guilty party, rather than seeking genuine solutions to those very serious issues and participating in a substantive and constructive discussion in the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.